Teaching Critical Evaluation of News in a (Mis)Information Environment

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Library hosts Fake News Workshop

What is it? How do you Identify it? And what you can do about it

Thursday, February 8th
From: 12pm-1pm
University Library blg. 15,
2nd floor, room 2907

This workshop will discuss the history of “fake” news, how it is defined, the different types of fake news, how to spot and identify fake news and what you can do when confronted with it.

To register please go to: https://tinyurl.com/lldevqy
Fake News - A Working Definition:

“...deliberate attempts to pass off unverified claims as facts. [they] gain plausibility from a nucleus of truth around which orbit speculations driven by partisan polarization, the resistance of citizens to information that contradicts them, and the reluctance of self-interested elites to reject them outright.”

What we taught...

- Definition of Fake News
- Historical context of Fake News
- Varieties of Fake News
  - Satire
  - Propaganda
  - Conspiracy Theories
  - (and how these were amalgamated and weaponized by Social Media)
- How to identify Fake News
- Debunking Fake News with empathy
How we taught:

- Hybrid of lecture and hands-on:
  - Lectures would cover the history and characteristics of Fake News
  - Participants would either be broken up into groups and given examples of Fake News to analyze
  - OR: we would use the Factitious Fake News identification app to poll the audience
Tools for our students:

http://libguides.library.cpp.edu/fakenews

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Future Plans:

- Fall 2018:
  - Fake News Lesson
  - Incorporated into our module addressing “Authority is Constructed and Contextual”
In a (Mis)Information Environment

How do we equip and encourage our students to become more discerning and critical evaluators of news?
News Evaluation Campaign

- Exhibit
- Special Events
- Instruction
- Social Media
Exhibit

- News and its importance
- Our news environment
- Ways to evaluate news media
Special Events

Talk: *Fostering More Accurate Science Coverage Using Science Expertise to Evaluate Journalism*
- Dr. Emmanuel Vincent, Center for Climate Communication (UC Merced)
- [Climatefeedback.org](http://Climatefeedback.org)

Workshop: *Critically Consuming News - Instructional Strategies*
- Partnered with Center for Engaged Teaching and Learning (CETL) and Writing faculty
Instruction

Lesson Plan
- *News Evaluation - Beyond the Checklist*
- Reached out to faculty teaching introductory writing

Social Media

FB Live Event
○ Partnered with University Communications

Library FB postings
○ Connected to Exhibit
Varying Levels of Success

1. Instruction
2. Events
3. Exhibit
4. Social Media

“Elevate your news evaluation: Emphasizing media literacy, one library’s initiative” in College & Research Libraries News
Framework

Authority is Constructed and Contextual
○ Critically examines evidence
○ Asks about origins and context

Information Creation as a Process

Information Has Value
Ongoing Strategies

Summer Bridge
○ Web evaluation focus

Workshops - Web Evaluation & News Series
○ Be Your Own Web Fact Checker
○ Know & Evaluate Your News Sources
○ Find News Sources with Library Databases

https://libguides.ucmerced.edu/news
Fake News: The Old

- Lying
- Faking for Dollars
- Propaganda
- Humor
Fake News: The New

○ Volume
○ Distribution
○ Reproduction
○ Alteration
HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS

CONSIDER THE SOURCE
Click away from the story to investigate the site, its mission and its contact info.

READ BEYOND
Headlines can be outrageous in an effort to get clicks. What's the whole story?

CHECK THE AUTHOR
Do a quick search on the author. Are they credible? Are they real?

SUPPORTING SOURCES?
Click on those links. Determine if the info given actually supports the story.

CHECK THE DATE
Reposting old news stories doesn't mean they're relevant to current events.

IS IT A JOKE?
If it is too outlandish, it might be satire. Research the site and author to be sure.

CHECK YOUR BIASES
Consider if your own beliefs could affect your judgement.

ASK THE EXPERTS
Ask a librarian, or consult a fact-checking site.
Address the emotional component
College Rankings
Generational Slanders

**MILLENIALS:**

- **LAZY**
- **SNOWFLAKES**
- **PARTICIPATION TROPHIES**
Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education

- Authority Is Constructed and Contextual
- Information Creation as a Process
- Information Has Value
- Research as Inquiry
- Scholarship as Conversation
- Searching as Strategic Exploration

Credibility and applicability of most information is not an either/or proposition.
Success?
The Big Picture

Information Creation as a Process

Authority is Constructed and Contextual

Information Has Value

How Information is Created

What Determines Credibility

How Power Influences Information

How Information is Valued
Evaluating Sources: P.R.O.V.E.N. Questions

Purpose
Relevance
Objectivity
Verifiability
Expertise
Newness

Purpose: How and why the source was created.
- How and why did the authors publish this information? Is it intended to educate, inform, persuade, sell, or entertain? Do the authors, publishers, or sponsors state this purpose, or try to disguise it?
- Why was this information published in this particular type of source (book, article, website, blog, etc.)?
- Who is the intended audience? Is the source designed for the general public, students, or experts?

Relevance: The value of the source for your needs.
- Is the type of source appropriate for how you plan to use it, and for your assignment’s requirements?
- How useful is the information in this source, compared to other sources? Does it answer your question or support your arguments? Does it add something new and important to your knowledge of the topic?
- How detailed is the information? Is it too general or too specific? Is it too basic or too advanced?

Objectivity: The reasonableness and completeness of the information.
- Do the authors present the information thoroughly and professionally? Do they critique other perspectives respectfully? Do they use strong, emotional, manipulative, or offensive language?
- Do the authors, publishers, or sponsors have a particular political, ideological, cultural, or religious point of view? Do they acknowledge this point of view, or try to disguise it?
- Is the information fact or opinion? Is it biased? Does the source present multiple points of view on the topic? Does it leave out, or make fun of, important facts or alternative perspectives?

Verifiability: The accuracy and truthfulness of the information.
- Do the authors support the information they present with strong factual evidence? Do they cite or provide links to other sources? Do those sources pass the P.R.O.V.E.N. test?
- What do experts say about the topic? Can you verify the information in other credible sources?
- Does the source contradict itself, include false statements, or misrepresent other sources?
- Are there errors in spelling, punctuation, or grammar?

Expertise: The authority of the creators of the source.
- What makes the authors, publishers, or sponsors of the source authorities on the topic? Do they have related education, personal or professional experience, or other expertise? Are they affiliated with an educational institution or respected organization? Is their expertise acknowledged by other authorities on the topic?
- Do they provide an important alternative perspective? Do other sources cite this source?
- Has the source been reviewed in some way, such as by an editor or through peer review?
- Does the source provide contact information for the authors, publishers, and/or sponsors?

Newness: The age of the information.
- Is your topic in an area that requires current information (such as science, technology, or current events), or could information found in older sources still be useful and valid?
- When was the information presented in the source first published or posted? Are the references or links to other sources up to date?
- Are newer sources available that would add important information to your understanding of the topic?
“First reading this assignment I didn't think I had been affected by fake news. Boy was I wrong ... fake news has been affecting me without me even knowing or realizing it.”

-- Library 101 Student
Faculty Colloquium: Pseudoscience and Fake Science News

Inquisitive students filled the Fé Bland Forum for the "Pseudoscience Literacy" faculty colloquium Wednesday evening to explore the realm of fallacious research and learn to question fake scientific news.
Online Tutorials: Research And Information Literacy Modules
Success & Challenges

“Now having more knowledge of the fact that most information I've been reading and researching has been false or biased, I've come up with some ways to try to avoid this kind of misleading information.”
--- Library 101 Student

“I feel powerless, scared and confused because I am unclear of what the facts are ... I honestly have no idea what to believe, and this I blame only the fake news for!”
--- Library 101 Student
Next Steps
Discussion Questions

1. What have you found effective in your own practice in teaching news evaluation?
2. What do we want students to know, consider, and do when evaluating news sources?
3. What are some of the best approaches for teaching students source evaluation? There may be debates between ...
   - checklist vs. no checklist.
   - know your source vs. consider individual piece.
   - knowledge vs. skills.
   - get off the page vs. look deeply at content.
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